



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Business Advisory Committee Meeting #6
October 6, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Randy Bouskek, Ben Colglazier, Tim Geisler, Charlie Jacobsen, Alison Pence, John Slama, Mark Steinhauser, Jeff Washburne

Agency Staff and Guests: MarySue Abel, Paul Danielson, David Davies, Andrew Gillett, Sophia Ginis, Erik Hansen, Jessica Laabs, Nick Landwer, Kathryn O'Brien, Dan Pfeiffer, Juan Rangel, Scott Reed, Jim Toulous, Alicia Vap

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Station Area Planning – Andrew Gillett, Hennepin County

Urban Design Associates facilitated a series of meetings last week in Brooklyn Park. Over 240 people were reached over four days.

Market opportunities:

- Limited available sites besides Oak Grove for major new development/redevelopment in near term
- Demand for multifamily housing
- Public support needed to accelerate redevelopment

63rd Avenue – In short term, develop the vacant county-owned parcel into neighborhood-serving retail. In the long term, develop attached senior housing.

Brooklyn Boulevard – In short term, parcels that are city-owned should remain retail. In the long term, some sites could redevelop as attached housing and small retail.

85th Avenue N – In short term, civic plaza and performing arts center as expansion to college. Longer term, college housing.

93rd Avenue N – In short term, employment hub (CSM development). In long term, redevelopment.

Oak Grove – Target owns the land. In short term, attached housing, corporate office, hotels, dining are being considered.

There are upcoming meetings in Robbinsdale, Brooklyn Park, and Crystal to continue station area planning. Updates at www.hennepin.us/bottineau.

3. Ridership Updates – Alicia Vap, BPO

Alicia summarized how ridership is calculated. Modeling considers population, employment, households, as reflected in Met Council's Thrive 2040 Plan. This is a very technical process and is required by FTA to request funding.

The regional model includes a series of LRT assumptions on frequency of service, feeder bus network, parking rates, fare structure, hours of service, and the regional network. Note Metro Transit would do an extensive outreach process with the public to review any proposed changes to existing routes.

The Draft EIS projected 27,000 riders by 2030. There has been some slight decrease in riders in some locations due to service frequency, addition of station at Plymouth, end-to-end running time increase, updated development assumptions, addition of Penn Avenue BRT (C Line), update/validation of feeder bus assumptions, and park-and-ride capacity constraints. Estimated project ridership in 2040 is estimated to be 27,000.

Jacobsen: Is there a typical bottom threshold to have a station?

Vap: There is no bottom; there are many reasons to have a station and ridership is just one.

O'Brien: Western Station on Central Corridor was projected to have 270 riders.

Boushek: In comparison to other lines, how accurate is this model?

Vap: Both Green Line and Blue Line have outpaced their projections. When we've had calls with FTA and our modelers, they are always looking for ways to make the model more predictable, but there are certain limitations of the modeling, like special events.

Danielson: Model right now is based on most current on-board survey done on the Blue Line (2010). A new on-board survey for Green Line will be done in 2016. The modeling is very fluid, could be doing another ridership update if data is received. FTA does not want to have us overpromise and underperform, so they only want us to use proven data.

Boushek: Has there been a case where we've significantly underestimated a station and had to make modifications?

MarySue Abel: Some modifications have been made at Nicollet due to development.

Danielson: Platforms are not capacity restricted; wouldn't have to change anything with infrastructure. For example, extra crowd control may be needed during a Vikings game, but the infrastructure is there.

4. Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue Stations – Alicia Vap, BPO

BPO came before the BAC in April with both of these stations; and the group agreed then to continue looking at both. The team has been able to conduct additional analysis and collect input from the community. Common concerns are safety, parking, and environmental impacts.

Quantitative factors are relatively similar between the two stations, with higher vegetative impact and greater employment at Golden Valley Road and more homes within a 10-minute walk around the Plymouth Station. Relative to qualitative factors, stations are similar, but Plymouth Avenue offers greater opportunity to address environmental justice populations.

Colglazier: Was there a quantitative number used for residents? “High” rating for Golden Valley Road; there is no high density residential around there and the folks who live around there aren’t the types who would likely use transit.

Vap: CAC had some concerns of this nature.

Washburne: Are both stops technically in Golden Valley? Is there any political consideration on that front? Does it benefit or hurt Golden Valley having a station within city boundaries?

Colglazier: I don’t think so, impacts overall to Golden Valley are pretty minimal. Golden Valley citizens or businesses are nominally served by either of these stops; can just as easily just go to a transit center. The thought is that people are more inclined to take a more frequent LRT than looking at a bus schedule.

Jacobsen: What’s the timing of bus relative to light rail? Does it interfere?

O’Brien: Dedicated guideway LRT has a higher ability to maintain schedule.

Colglazier: Frequency also helps – LRT is more frequent, don’t have to wait as long if you miss the train as you’d have to wait if you missed the bus.

5. Technical Issue: 73rd Avenue crossing – Nick Landwer, BPO

An at-grade crossing was recommended at the April 9th Corridor Management Committee meeting, but further analysis at this crossing has led the team back to a recommendation of grade separation, based on safety. BPO is working with the county on the fact that this is a moving route, and the bridge needs to have a higher clearance, resulting in a taller structure.

Jacobsen: Timing would be worked out with Hennepin County so the 4-lane and 6-lane won’t require multiple closures?

Landwer: Coordination will occur so we could at least get some of the bridge structures in so there would be less implications for the public.

6. Transmission Lane Coordination – Jim Toulouse, BPO

There is a shared transmission line corridor with BNSF. Any improvements need to be compatible with any freight rail improvements and LRT improvements; constructability; electrical clearances during and after construction; and maintenance access in the future.

The south end of the corridor up to 33rd/Indiana consists primarily of steel lattice structures on the east side of the right-of-way. The project team is currently moving toward a recommendation of new structures on the west side of the BNSF corridor. This keeps them further away from freight rail and LRT and affords more room for any improvements on the east side of the structure.

On the north end of the corridor, poles are already on the west side and it is proposed that they remain in place.

Colglazier: How far north is the overlap between the transmission lines and LRT?

Toulouse: Up to Highway 100, then transmission line goes overland to the northeast.

Washburne: Costs – are these negotiated out?

Toulouse: They'll all be negotiated out. There are 38 structures on the east side. The number of poles will be determined during design; probably a 1:1 replacement, but there may be an opportunity to reduce. This will be based on further discussion with Xcel.

Washburne: Timing? Does Xcel go in first and get out of the way?

Toulouse: Thought is that they could relocate transmission line and other work before LRT work begins on the east side – this would eliminate a big hazard for construction.

7. Traction Power Substation (TPSS) – Jim Toulouse, BPO

TPSS examples were shared. TPSS are generally located within 500 feet of the LRT tracks, and spaced approximately 5,000 feet apart. Location is determined by a load flow study, and at least 17 TPSS have been identified as needed. This model will be refined to see if this number can be reduced, and BPO will work with communities to further refine locations. Public property is a priority for placement, followed by private property acquired as part of the LRT project, or vacant private property.

Pence: Do these put stress on the grid for local homeowners?

Toulouse: Xcel is looking at these sites to identify if these are better or worse for the local grid. Power to TPSS also comes from another source.

Boushek: What does one of these TPSS cost?

Toulouse: Don't have this number off top of my head, but can get it.

8. Outreach Update: Community Open Houses – Dan Pfeiffer, BPO

Another round of open houses is coming up that focus on the environmental process:

- Crystal – 10/19
- Brooklyn Park – 10/20
- Robbinsdale – 10/21 (in conjunction with Hennepin County station area planning)
- Golden Valley – 10/28
- Minneapolis – 10/29

There is also an open house event being held in Robbinsdale tomorrow 10/7 from 5-7pm specifically to discuss 39 ½ rail crossing. Looking for written feedback.

9. Schedule for Roll-out of Project Scope and Cost Estimate – MarySue Abel, BPO

On October 26, there will be a joint CAC/BAC meeting at Crystal City Hall at 6pm. The project team will present a revised project scope at this meeting. On October 29, the same recommendation will be made to the CMC, in addition to rolling out a revised cost estimate. The opportunity to talk with the BAC about revised scope and cost will be at the regularly scheduled meeting on November 3rd. November 12th will be the final recommendation from CMC on the revised project scope/cost estimate. Met Council will take action on December 9th, including authorization to release Municipal Consent plans to the cities and county.

Washburne: Graphic presented at a previous meeting, recall a graphic with percent certainty. Where will we be by December 9?

Abel: Design will be at about 15-20% completion. Costs will be refined again around August 2016. Hoping number we have at the end of this year will not result in any significant changes next year, but there will be 6 more months of design before it is refined again.

10. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

No comments.

11. Adjourn

Next BAC meeting is a joint meeting with the CAC on October 26. Next regularly scheduled BAC meeting will occur November 3rd.